

Blogging toward Sunday

By [Debbie Blue](#)

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Wisdom seems like something you find after many years, something elusive, like an old Indian in a cave in the desert. You might have to fast if you want to get a glimpse of her, or trek up to an altitude of 20,000 feet to a Buddhist monastery in Nepal, lead a contemplative life, do lots of reading. So it's surprising to open up the book of Proverbs and find Wisdom in the busiest place in town—"beside the gates...at the entrance of the portals"—perhaps even at the market, where people go to sell things and buy things. We can imagine someone hocking watches to her left, a hot dog vendor to her right. She's indiscriminate—she calls out to the dullards, the dolts and the fools, offering her companionship to ANYONE, being AVAILABLE and LOUD, a woman yelling in the street.

What possible sort of wisdom can one offer in such a noisy place—certainly not a dharma talk or a discourse on beauty, but maybe "Watch where you're walking, be careful with your wallet, don't cross now, the light's red"—the sort of thing you get out of the book of Proverbs—practical stuff that can feel trite if what you're after is the secrets of the universe. It's almost surprising to find these little maxims canonized in scripture; Proverbs might do better as a pocket-sized book available at the Barnes and Nobles checkout counter.

If the book is mostly a collection of black and white dogmas, however, and what seem like static little moral truths, it's sort of wild to find Wisdom *here*, alive on the street, moving and gesturing and eager to love anyone who will love her.

A large part of the scripture is a poem where Wisdom describes where she came from. She wasn't created by the strict logic of men, rationally conceiving principles to live by. As she tells her story, she was birthed by God. The word in verse 30 often translated "master workman" is enigmatic. Was she beside God like a "master workman" or, instead, a *nursling*? Considering the other birth imagery here; according to some, a better translation is "little child." Nursling. That's not God with some worker guy at God's side drawing blueprints, getting out the hammer and

nails, measuring stuff—that's more like God with little Wisdom at God's breast, God trying to nurse a baby in one arm and create the world with the other. I like the image.

And Wisdom, the text says, was God's delight. She "frolicked" before God, played, (throwing her food, maybe), spinning around in circles. There is a lot of joy and play and delight going on. The text says her delight is in humanity. A good translation for verse 22 is "The Lord created me as the beginning of his way"—as if in giving birth to Wisdom, God gives birth to God's way. Maybe God's way of being in the world involves an enormous amount of delight and play.

Instead of breeding in her contempt for the needy, fragile, culture-bound morass of humanity, Wisdom's lofty origins (at the bosom of God) fill her with love for creation. She loves humanity, desires its companionship, desires creatures to love her. This could border on unseemly, this indiscriminate seeking out there on the streets, calling out for anyone who wants her—but Wisdom doesn't keep herself separate from the masses or the mundane details of day-to-day life. She stands on the corner and gets involved with human beings.

The Godhead is beautiful material for Trinity Sunday: it is not some decrepit, removed passionless, patriarch, but "God nursing"—this intimate loving delighting-in that spills out to all of creation, "rejoicing in the inhabited world and delighting in the sons of men."

In the beginning, says the author of the Gospel of John (hearkening back to Wisdom), there was not just an abstract god, an elusive essence overwhelmingly distant. In the beginning God contained within Godself a personal union: relationship. And this word comes to pitch its tent with humanity in all its culture-bound messy ruckus, apparently not put off by humanity's unkempt campsite or the marshmallow streaked the campers' faces.